

10TH ANNIVERSARY 2010-2019



Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JANUARY 2020



DR NAMRATA GOSWAMI
How the World Shaped up in 2019

COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF NOVICE BUDDHIST MONK BY MARK ULYSEAS



**SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS.
DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2020!**

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount for this just cause.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

Donate

All articles and photographs are the copyright of www.liveencounters.net and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of www.liveencounters.net. Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.



©Mark Ulyseas

CONTRIBUTORS



How the World Shaped up in 2019

Dr Namrata Goswami

Dr. Namrata Goswami is an author, strategic analyst, and consultant on counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, alternate futures, and great power politics. Earlier, she was Senior Fellow at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and Research Fellow at the Institute for Défense Studies and Analyses (IDSA). She is the recipient of the Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellowship. Currently, she is working on two book projects, one on the topic of ‘Ethnic Narratives’, to be published by Oxford University Press, and the other on the topic of ‘Great Power Ambitions” to be published by Lexington Press, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield.



The Art of Change

Randhir Khare

Randhir Khare is a distinguished writer, artist, teacher and theatre personality. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards for his unique contribution to culture and education. His 36 volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, translation from tribal dialects and other writings as well as his 7 solo exhibitions all explore themes of identity, belonging and the struggle to stay human in a violent and fragmented world. He has more recently spearheaded an initiative to enrich formal education through the experience of the arts.



Stories of Sufi Wisdom

Paulo Coelho

Paulo Coelho (Portuguese: [ˈpawlu kuˈeɫu]), born August 24, 1947) is considered one of the most influential authors of our times. He is most widely read and his books have sold more than 195 million copies worldwide, have been released in 170 countries and been translated into 80 languages. He has received numerous prestigious international awards amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. He has been a member of the Academy of Letters of Brazil since 2002, and in 2007 he was proclaimed Messenger of Peace by the United Nations.



Analysis of the Theravāda Buddhist concept of *karma*

Dr. Volkmar Ensslin

He started sharing his insights of Buddhist studies combined with ten years’ experience as a management consultant, businessman, and executive coach in the international corporate business world with the younger generation as a university lecturer. At the same time, he became a public speaker and trainer in Buddhist Leadership and Buddhist Business Ethics, CSR, and Leadership Development. Having received a scholarship in Mandarin language at Beijing Foreign Studies University. He then started to combine his fascination with Asian culture study and business wise; receiving a PhD by combining Buddhism with present-day corporate business world.



Sustainable Architecture

Wolfgang Widmoser

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted still-lives in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the –elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea – Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang’s motto – aesthetic = ethic – points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.



Hell & Heaven

Mark Ulyseas

Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn’t need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*).



Full Metal Jacket

Neal Adams

Neal Adams born in London England 1968. Formative years Neal had a passion for drawing, which lead to Private tuition from professor James turner of Wimbledon school of art. Period 1980- studying painting National gallery London, professional artist since 1998, currently residing in Asia and finding inspiration for his luminous works concentrating with mediums such as metallic leaf and oil glazing that bring texture and light into his paintings.



Landscapes of Vietnam

Vũ Tuấn Hưng

Vũ Tuấn Hưng is a professional photographer and tour guide based in Hồ Chí Minh city. He is a tour guide for mainly German speaking tourists. His photographs feature in numerous publications across the world. If you are visiting Vietnam and need his assistance please email - vietnaminfos@gmail.com



Hair of the Dog

Bobby Chinn

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. Bobby’s enthusiasm, energy and passion for food are infectious as he cooks and entertains. He is now a permanent judge on *Top Chef Middle East* which is one of the highest rated shows for MBC and the most popular culinary show across the Middle East and North Africa. Thanks in part to his role as host of Discovery TLC’s *World Café* series and judge on *Top Chef Middle East*, Bobby catapulted into a culinary celebrity across Asia and the Middle East



Cassandra

Interview

This interview appeared in the inaugural edition of Live Encounters Magazine January 2010.

Dr. Namrata Goswami is an author, strategic analyst, and consultant on counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, alternate futures, and great power politics. Earlier, she was Senior Fellow at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and Research Fellow at the Institute for Défense Studies and Analyses (IDSA). She is the recipient of the Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellowship. Currently, she is working on two book projects, one on the topic of 'Ethnic Narratives', to be published by Oxford University Press, and the other on the topic of 'Great Power Ambitions' to be published by Lexington Press, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield.

DR NAMRATA GOSWAMI

HOW THE WORLD SHAPED UP IN 2019

2019 turned out to be an eventful year with regard to geo-politics and astro-politics. Geopolitically, China emerged as a Great Power, with ambitions that were backed by the willingness and the resources to broadcast power. This was apparent in its 70th year celebration of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (October 1, 2019), and in its financial investments in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the meantime, the United States under the leadership of President Donald Trump imposed trade sanctions on China, for unfair trade practices, termed a trade war. Whether that strategy has worked to change China's economic position in the world, we are not sure yet. As per a December 2019 *The Atlantic* article titled "Trump Got Tough on China. It did not work", Trump's trade war on China has not had the desired effect. Yet others assert the trade war has limited China's economic choices, and stifled its economic standing.



Dr Namrata Goswami

Trump's policies of America First, anti-immigration stance, and climate change denial, has had an impact on the international order, with countries like Canada, Australia, France, offering to take leadership with regard to climate change. Trump's continuous attacks on the NATO alliance, and international institutions crafted after the Second World War, that has stood the test of time, has weakened if not completely damaged the Atlantic based alliance system. Yet, as we all know, to overestimate Trump's so-called negative impact on the international order and the U.S., as there is a penchant for these days amongst the academia and journalists, is to overestimate a person, and underestimate a country and its institutions. There are certain values that the U.S. stands for, foremost amongst which is democracy, free trade, individual liberty, that will stand the test of time, advocated by a robust civil society, its institutions to include the judiciary and the electorate.

India, a major democracy and growing military power broadcasted its willingness to change its constitution, as it did with the abrogation of Article 370 that overhauled the status of the state of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. To change the constitutional status of this state was an election promise of the Bharatiya Janata Party and it went about doing so. While the western media condemned India's move as draconian and undemocratic as it did not account for the local population's wishes and neither consulted the local leaders, the Modi government showcased it as a move to stem out terrorism and unify Kashmir with the rest of India. This led to anxieties in other states, that have similar laws like Nagaland with Article 371 (A). India also enacted an amendment to its citizenship laws, that offered citizenship to persecuted minorities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, that excludes Muslims. This has resulted in severe protests especially in the state of Assam that conducted a National Register of Citizens (NRC), to identify illegal migrants. The fear was that the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) will offer citizenship to those illegal Hindus from Bangladesh residing in Assam. The debate continues on that count.

On the other side of the world, the United Kingdom that voted to exit the European Union (EU) is still undergoing that process with a pro Brexit Prime Minister now in power, with a plan now voted for by its Parliament to exit the EU by January 31, 2020. It will be interesting to watch how the EU will turn out to be without the UK as a key member. Time for France and Germany to take over, and with the obvious consequence for the UK having less influence in Europe altogether. The fear of being swamped by migrant workers is real but so is the UK's declining influence in the long run.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

While the U.S. Congress has passed the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019*, that imposes sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials responsible for human rights abuses there, whether it will lead to actual pressure on China to change its policies vis-à-vis Hong Kong is not clear. Protests continue as we speak resisting more and more mainland political intrusions into the human rights for Hong Kong residents.

In Asian and African geopolitics, with the Trump Administration's wide-ranging America first stance, and willingness to leave allies to face the burnt of policies crafted together (read the Kurds in Syria), the rise of China's influence has been inevitable. As per a Asia Power Index conducted by the Lowy Institute, the influence of China has become stronger than ever, and so has its ability to craft alternate institutions, laws and policies. This includes its growing presence in Asia, South America and Africa under its BRI. While the Hongkong protests against extradition to the mainland have shone the light on China and human rights, little has been done in terms of actual physical intervention to enable protestors, similar to the lack of response when China unilaterally built artificial islands on the South China Sea (SCS). While the U.S. Congress has passed the *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019*, that imposes sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials responsible for human rights abuses there, whether it will lead to actual pressure on China to change its policies vis-à-vis Hong Kong is not clear. Protests continue as we speak resisting more and more mainland political intrusions into the human rights for Hong Kong residents. My concern is that a similar fate may ensue with regard to international verdicts for Hong Kong, similar to China's complete disregard of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague that issued a verdict against China's nine dash line claim in the South China Sea (SCS). In response, China insisted that it was not a party to any dispute as the SCS is an internal Chinese issue. Little could be done as China went about building the artificial islands, hardening the airfields and installing military equipment on these islands. China's attitude to any international condemnation: none of your business. SCS is Chinese territory, and hence no outside power can lay claim to it.

In the field of astro-politics, 2019 has been a significant year. In the 50th year of the celebration of the first human landing on the surface of the Moon, China became the first country to land a rover on the far side of the Moon, referred to in popular media as the 'dark side of the Moon'. You can thank Pink Floyd for that one. The *Chang'e 4* not only succeeded in landing for the first time on the far side, but also demonstrated humanity's first cotton seed sprouting on the lunar surface. The China dream for space is to accomplish a human settlement on the Moon by 2036. 2019 witnessed NASA sending its "New Horizon" probe to the farthest reaches of the universe, known as the Kuiper Belt object, nicknamed earlier Ultima Thule. It now has a new name, *Arrokoth*, meaning 'sky', drawn from the language of the Powhatan people, a Native American tribe indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay region, including Maryland, which houses the New Horizons mission control at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

To borrow from Gandhi again, who despite his pessimism about the modern democratic state, continued to harbor immense belief in the human spirit for change: I say ; let us become the change we want to see in the world. Happy New Year. 2020...here's to a new decade of hope and human progress. Let the stars be not our limit.

The astropolitical strategic significance of New Horizon was lost on the world however, dazzled by the Chang'e 4's landing on a strategic real estate on the Moon, an area it continues to probe as I write this piece. While science exploration missions are a great boon to humanity, a space development mission directed by a singular strategic vision like that offered by President Xi Jinping, is compelling. The idea that China could become the first country to achieve human settlement, by extension imprint its value system on the inner solar system, has taken on a significant meaning. Countries like Japan have revealed plans for lunar missions between 2022-2024 in collaboration with another Asian space faring nation, India. India attempted a first lunar South Pole landing in 2019, but failed in the last few minutes. Its *Chandrayaan 2* mission did get to the lunar orbit. 2019 also saw the establishment of military institutional structures for outer-space. India announced the establishment of a separate space defense agency and tested an Anti-Satellite weapon. France established its new French Space Force within its air force. In December, the U.S. established a Space Force as part of its Air Force with its own Command. While most countries have explained these military space establishments by stating that space is getting further militarized, countries like China are articulating visions of space industrialization and development. This means that like the navies of the world that polices the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) for commerce, space will soon see Celestial Lines of Communications (CLOCs), that will augment such space commerce.

While global poverty has gone down in 2019, major areas of the world continue to suffer from hunger and poverty. What is worse is that while most developed areas of the world have easy or cheap access to the internet, nearly 3 billion people are still without access. Entrepreneurs like Elon Musk envision satellite-based internet as a way to solve such issues, where internet access will not depend on ground-based fiber internet and cell phone towers. We will have to wait and see how that turns out.

In the world of academia especially those of us studying international relations and politics, it is astounding that despite local discourses existing in developing or least developed nations, the discourses that dominate the field continue to be those that are developed in the West. This academic dominance of framework setting includes not just methods and critical studies, but also how one chose to practice in this field. I sometimes wonder how we would have evolved as a field of study had colonialism not been an event in history. Counterfactual analysis is always such an interesting field of study. One should watch the series 'Man in a High Castle' to appreciate what I mean here.

2020 is the start of a new decade. The world continues to be highly militarized, and human societies depends on ever intrusive methods of law enforcement in their midst to include invisible surveillance of citizens by states, democratic and authoritarian alike, to remain civilized at best. Cameras are literally everywhere and each one of us documented countless times. Gandhi once despaired about the modern state as the most violent of human organizations. But that's the best we have got, to be the best of who we are, at least for now. Anarchy and rebellion are charming, but not if you have to live that way every day. It can descend into mob rule and the consequent evils that come with it. Yet in the midst of all that, there is hope. I have seen enough of human decency and kindness to remain aspirational in my world view, notwithstanding very difficult circumstances, especially navigating the world of work as a woman in India. To borrow from Gandhi again, who despite his pessimism about the modern democratic state, continued to harbor immense belief in the human spirit for change: I say ; let us become the change we want to see in the world. Happy New Year. 2020...here's to a new decade of hope and human progress. Let the stars be not our limit.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

Randhir Khare is a distinguished writer, artist, teacher and theatre personality. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards for his unique contribution to culture and education. His 36 volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, translation from tribal dialects and other writings as well as his seven solo exhibitions all explore themes of identity, belonging and the struggle to stay human in a violent and fragmented world. He has more recently spearheaded an initiative to enrich formal education through the experience of the arts. <https://randhirkhare.in/>

RANDHIR KHARE

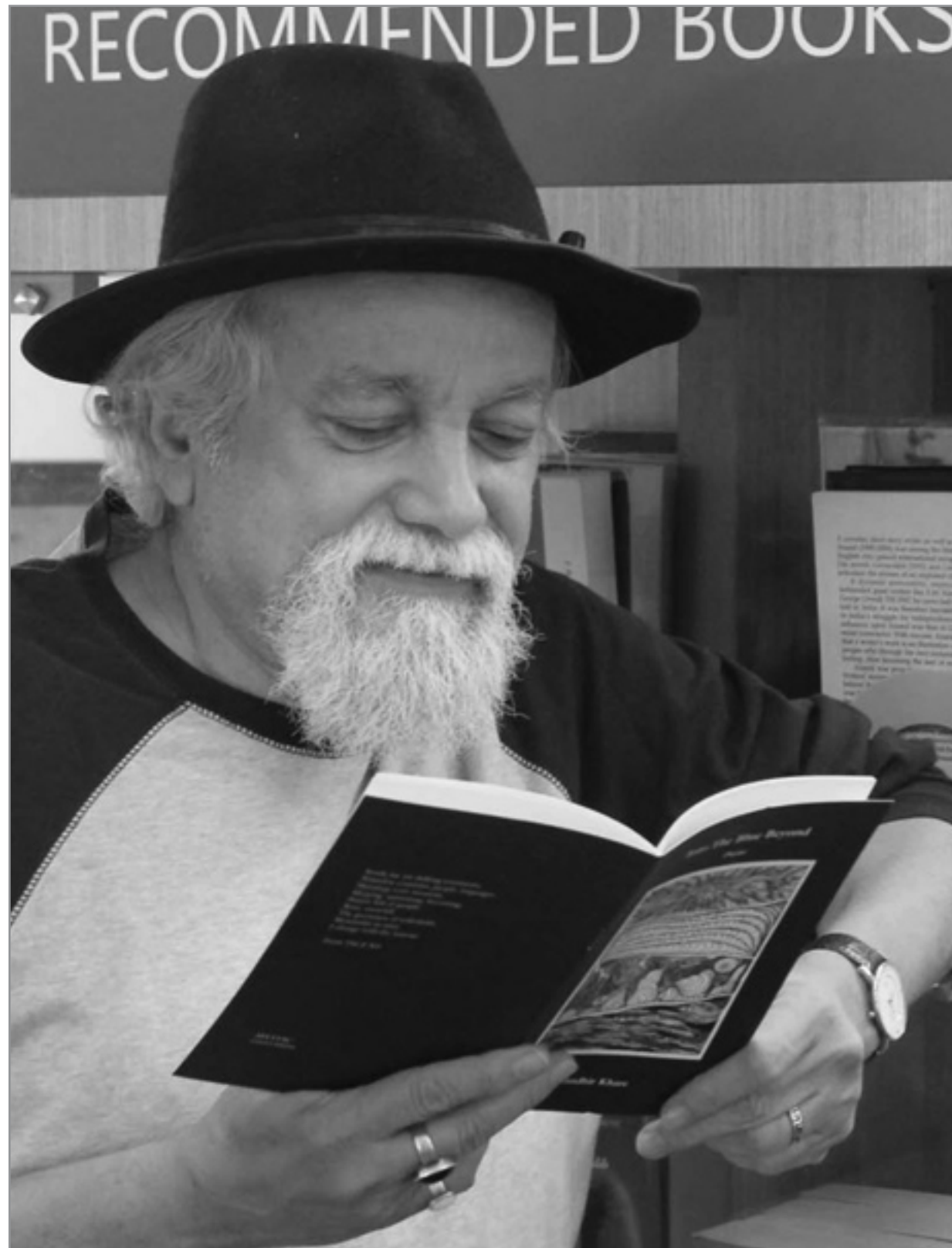
THE ART OF CHANGE

REFLECTIONS ON THE POWER OF ART

When I was eleven, studying in a makeshift school in Calcutta, we were asked in class by our English teacher (a bitter, self-opinionated man) to write a short story (based on a few uninspiring points that he had provided) about a dramatic confrontation between a piece of cheese and a mouse. To my misfortune, the man considered me to be an upstart and had in the past done all he could to be critical of everything that I said or wrote. I swore to myself that this time I was going to write a 'masterpiece' that would bowl him over once for all and leave him shattered in his grave.

I spent a good part of the night writing the story and went to school the next day, bursting with confidence, sure that I was going to nail the man. Well, I turned up in school and he asked the entire class to take out our 'homework' books in which we were expected to have written the story. I smugly shuffled through my school bag determined that I was going to blow him to pieces with my blunderbuss.

But as it turned out, he held the blunderbuss and I was the one who was going to be wrecked. I HAD LEFT MY BOOK AT HOME. I quickly kicked dust over the disaster and fished out another brown paper covered notebook (all homework books were covered with brown paper). I thought that had hoodwinked him. Obviously not. "You," he snapped, pointing to me, 'read.'



Randhir Khare

Repeatedly, along my many years as teacher, I have worked with children and young people of all ages and helped them to use the performing, visual and literary arts to explore their feelings, express themselves and learn in their own way the art of self preservation, self enhancement and self empowerment.

I opened my notebook and stared helplessly at the unwritten pages. Then I collected my wits and started reading the story aloud...straight from my memory of it, spicing it up on the way. The class was delighted and responded appreciatively, cheering and clapping me on as I cracked joke after joke and transformed the piece of cheese into unimaginably varied shapes in its effort to dupe the mouse. So involved was I in the story that I had forgotten to turn the pages and often didn't even look at the notebook.

"You are a magician," the man bellowed, walking up from behind me, "you can see words on blank pages. You need a reward."

Three resounding slaps followed. I thought that I had done an amazing job as a storyteller but according to him I was a liar. In those days a kicking, a slapping, a strapping or a caning were the order of the day and we received them with gratitude, relieved that our parents hadn't been informed else we would have got an even more fierce slamming.

Well, the flip side of the humiliating experience is that I went home and wrote my first poem, The Sky. It described the beauty and majesty of the infinite blue dome above me. There was no obvious connection between the two. It has taken me more than four and a half decades as an educationist to prove that there is in fact a hidden connection.

Creative self expression cleanses, liberates and empowers.

That single poem expanded my spirit in such a manner that I had almost instantly risen above and beyond the smallness of the man and the humiliation of the experience.

Repeatedly, along my many years as teacher, I have worked with children and young people of all ages and helped them to use the performing, visual and literary arts to explore their feelings, express themselves and learn in their own way the art of self preservation, self enhancement and self empowerment.

Out of this experience has grown my philosophy of Creative Self Expression.

Put into practise, this approach sees artistic expression as an integral part of an individual's learning process.



10 year olds in an expressive movement session with Randhir Khare.

Then the Universe intervened and the magnetic pull of like-mindedness made itself felt. CSE (Creative Self Expression) Enterprises was born along with Nadia Sen Sharma as the Co-Founder (who has nearly two decades in operations and marketing in the corporate world). Neeti Pherwani, an immensely gifted actor and theatre personality joined the team. Together, I like to think of ourselves as The Trinity.



Neeti Pherwani in a story-telling session.

It is often considered that creative arts experience is separate from academic learning. In fact, all creative experience within an educational institution is considered to be either extracurricular or co-curricular. From a very early age children and young people are made to believe and accept that the literary, performing and visual arts experiences are only 'hobbies'. However, there is an immediate relationship between the creative and artistic experience and the academic. Simply put, the experience of the creative arts has the power to enrich the learner's self-esteem, improve cognitive abilities, enrich communication skills, and improve overall social and psychological capacities. A well-adjusted individual makes for an enthusiastic and capable learner and a healthier classroom atmosphere and offers possibilities for a more dynamic relationship between the teacher and the learner. By 'dynamic' I mean positive, meaningful and humane, discouraging discrimination, bullying, labelling and low self-esteem triggers.

Initially of course, I experimented with focus groups of children and young people and guided them through a series of creative encounters or workshops built around emotional and social themes out of which they created their own expressive visual art, wrote stories and composed poems and songs and performed their own work.

Even though the attempts were 'meaningful', I was still the outsider.

Then the Universe intervened and the magnetic pull of like-mindedness made itself felt. CSE (Creative Self Expression) Enterprises was born along with Nadia Sen Sharma as the Co-Founder (who has nearly two decades in operations and marketing in the corporate world). Neeti Pherwani, an immensely gifted actor and theatre personality joined the team. Together, I like to think of ourselves as The Trinity.

All we needed was JUST ONE BREAK.

And it came from unexpected quarters. Dr Shamarao Kalmadi High School (Baner & Aundh), a branch of the Kaveri Group Of Institutions, opened its doors to our ideas and requested us to design a Creative Self Expression Programme that could be absorbed into the curriculum. They hoped that the programme could inspire children and young people to enliven and refine their communication skills, expressive and receptive language skills, steer students away from disruptive behaviour in the classroom, improve their attention and focus, encourage them to become more inclusive, generous, respectful and empathetic.

We have been fortunate that unlike other regular schools, this institution has embraced the programme with faith and trust. The Principal Mrs Lakshmi Gandhi and all the staff have joined us in our efforts and constantly reinforce all that we are attempting. It has become a true partnership for change.

It was a tall order but a worthwhile challenge. What an institution struggled with over the years, an integrated arts programme began to resolve in a matter of months. In seven months, more than five hundred learners are being transformed through a custom designed arts programme. They are writing stories, poems, short theatrical pieces, drawing, dancing, performing and expressing themselves like never before – all directly responding to value-based and deeply emotional issues. Debate, discussion and sharing of personal visions are now emerging spontaneously.

We have been fortunate that unlike other regular schools, this institution has embraced the programme with faith and trust. The Principal Mrs Lakshmi Gandhi and all the staff have joined us in our efforts and constantly reinforce all that we are attempting. It has become a true partnership for change.

Alongside this curriculum based programme, at another location, CSE has founded The Centre For Children With Special Needs. Learners from a wide range of disabilities, ranging from Autism to those with behavioural disorders, physical and learning challenges and social dysfunctionality, have been brought together and in their own special way discover themselves and their abilities.

And the power of the arts continues to express itself, changing lives and creating a whole new way of learning that has never before been experienced in the Indian Sub-Continent.

In the process, Nadia Sen Sharma, the Co-Founder, has been transformed into a creative magician in the classroom, triggering artwork, discussion, group creative writing and much more, Neeti Pherwani has taken wholeheartedly to applying her impressive performance and interactive skills to not only children and young people at the mainstream school but now takes one of the lead positions in the CSE Centre For Children With Special Needs.

We are working towards continuous change, continuous empowerment, continuous evolution, continuous refinement, continuous celebration of beauty, regaining a meaningful childhood – alive with wonder, self-respect, inclusiveness and empathy...towards life without sides.

Now, CSE has also been working silently at the drawing board on creating a centre that will contain all that we have experienced so far for children and young who don't fit in socially, educationally, emotionally, physically and mentally encompassing diversity where creative self-expression through the arts is the pivotal force.



The CSE team with special needs children.

As Ernst Fischer says in his radically path-breaking book, *The Necessity Of Art*, “Unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it.”



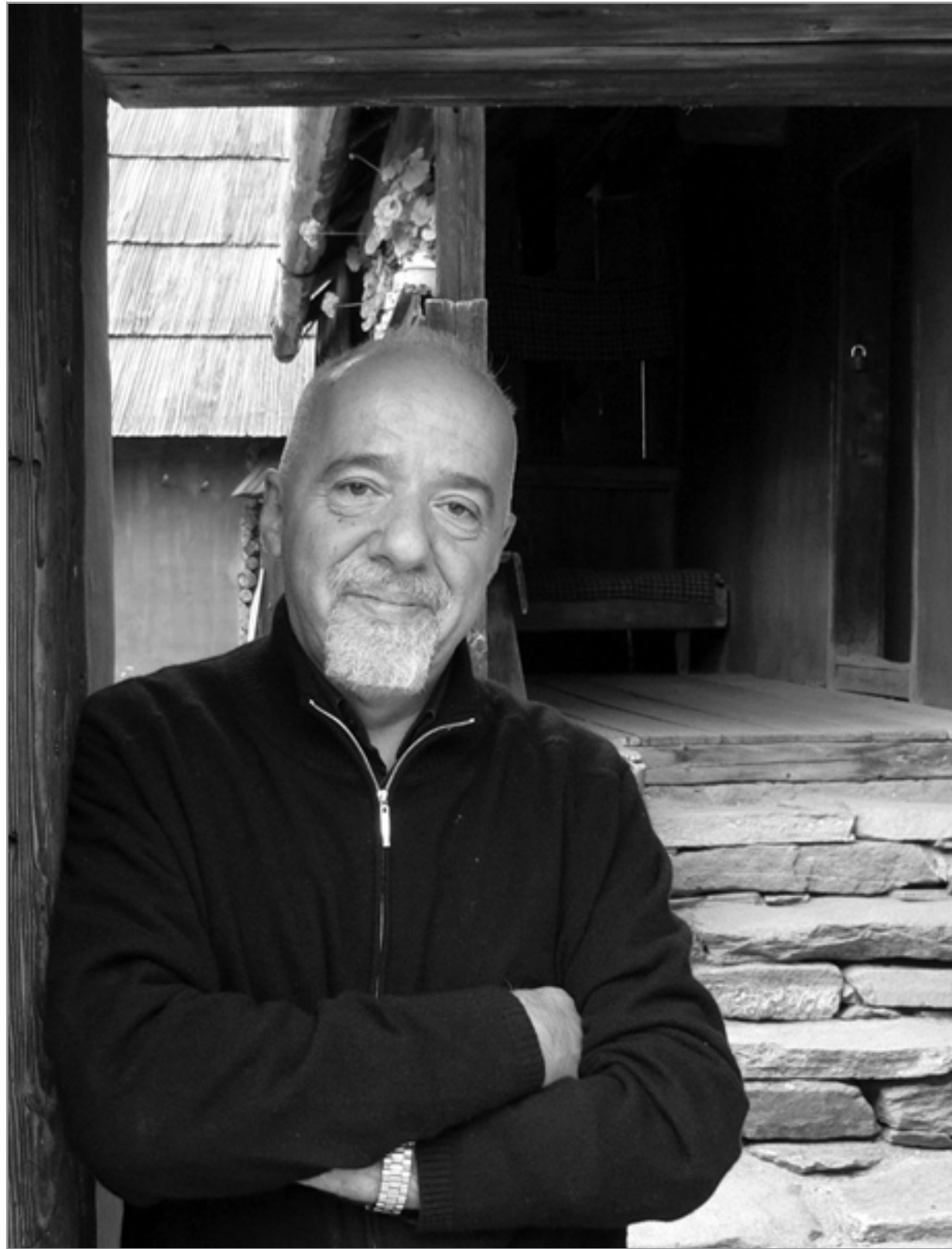
Nadia Sen Sharma in a self expression session.

If you would like to know more about what we do or how you could partner us in our effort to build a caring and empowering future for children and young people through the arts – contact us at cse.change@gmail.com.

As Ernst Fischer says in his radically path-breaking book, *The Necessity Of Art*, “Unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it.”



Nadia Sen Sharma in a session with 11-year olds.



Paulo Coelho (Portuguese: ['pawlu ku'eɫu]), born August 24, 1947) is considered one of the most influential authors of our times. His works have been translated into 81 languages and are sold in 224 territories. So far, the 1,018 versions of his 29 books have sold more than 225 million books around the world. He worked as a director, theater actor, composer and journalist. His collaboration with Brazilian composer and singer Raul Seixas gave some of the greatest classic rock songs in Brazil. He has received numerous prestigious international awards amongst them the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum. He has been a member of the Academy of Letters of Brazil since 2002, and in 2007 he was proclaimed Messenger of Peace by the United Nations. Paulo is the writer with the highest number of social media followers and is the all-time best-selling Portuguese language author. Coelho's latest book, *Hippie*, is his most autobiographical novel to date.

<https://www.facebook.com/paulocoelho/>

<https://paulocoelhoblog.com/>

<http://santjordi-asociados.com/writing/?livro=20>

<https://www.amazon.com/Hippie-Paulo-Coelho/dp/0525655611>

Translation by Bettina Dungs.

PAULO COELHO

STORIES OF SUFI WISDOM

Giving What We Have

A wise man arrived at the city of Akbar, but people didn't give him much importance. He was able to gather a few young people around him, while the rest of the citizens ridiculed his work.

He walked with a few disciples through the main street when a group of men and women started to insult him. Instead of pretending that he ignored what was happening, he blessed them.

When they left them, one of the disciples said:

"They say horrible things and you answer with beautiful words."

The wise man answered:

"Each one of us can only give what we have."

What's the Greatest Luxury

Next to the Monastery of Ibak, there lived a wise Sufi, an excellent business man, who ended up accumulating a great wealth.

As a visitor to the monastery saw the very high costs of the temple's renovation works, he said out loud:

"Behold that the paths of wisdom become the road of illusion; I found someone who says to search for the truth, who however, is filthy rich!"

These words ended up reaching the wise man's ears. When he was asked what he had to say about it, he said:

"I thought I had everything and I just found out that I was missing something. Now I know that I am really a rich man because I was able to get the most sophisticated luxury."

"And what is the most sophisticated luxury?" one of the monks wanted to know.

"Seeing someone envious of you."

Decision's Time

A camel seller arrived at a village selling beautiful animals, for excellent prices. Everyone bought a camel, but Mr. Sr. Hoosep.

Sometime later, the village was visited by another seller – with excellent camels, but for much higher prices. This time, Hoosep bought a few animals.

"You refrained from buying the camels almost for free and now you will buy them for almost twice as much?" his friends criticized him.

"Those that were cheap were too expensive because at the time I had little money," Hoosep answered. "These may seem more expensive, however, to me, they are cheap, as I have more than enough to buy them."

Distinguishing Good from Evil

A baker wanted to meet Uways, who went to the bakery disguised as a beggar. He took a piece of bread and began to eat it: the baker hit him and threw him in the street.

"Madman!" said a disciple who was arriving there, "don't you see you have just expelled the master you wanted to meet?"

Regretting it, the baker went to the street and asked him what he could do to be forgiven. Uways asked him to invite him and his disciples to eat.

The baker took them to an excellent restaurant and asked for the most expensive dishes.

"That is how we distinguish the evil from the good men," Uways said to his disciples during lunch. "This baker is capable of spending ten gold coins in a banquet because I am renowned, but is incapable of giving a piece of bread to feed a hungry beggar."

He started sharing his insights of Buddhist studies combined with ten years' experience as a management consultant, businessman, and executive coach in the international corporate business world with the younger generation as a university lecturer. At the same time, he became a public speaker and trainer in Buddhist Leadership and Buddhist Business Ethics, CSR, and Leadership Development. Having received a scholarship in Mandarin language at Beijing Foreign Studies University. He then started to combine his fascination with Asian culture study and business wise; receiving a PhD by combining Buddhism with present-day corporate business world.



DR VOLKMAR ENSSLIN

PRESENT DAY ANALYSIS OF THE THERAVĀDA BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF *Karma* FROM A MODERN SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW: BIOTECHNOLOGY

Introduction

With this paper I am going to discuss two questions regarding the Theravāda Buddhist concept of *karma*: First in a metaphysical way, second in regards to modern its ethically biotechnological developments. As for the metaphysical issue, I have chosen to scrutinize the Buddhist concept of *karma* and its appropriateness under the light of modern-day laws of physics. For the ethical issue I am going to have a brief look at biotechnological developments and their impact on the reinterpretation of the Buddhist understanding of life. Then I will link the metaphysical and ethical analysis, followed by my conclusion.

Volkmar Ensslin

The Buddhist concept of *karma* and its appropriateness under the light of modern-day laws of physics

Before I am going to analyze this metaphysical issue and its relatedness towards Buddhology, I am going to define the word '*karma*' according to nowadays Buddhology in contrast to a traditional understanding. In this matter I will illustrate, how a modern Buddhologist develops his understanding of *karma* against traditional beliefs, followed by a critical annotation by a thinker of the European Enlightenment period, and finally, I will describe the biologist's approach of criticizing the traditional interpretation by relating to modern-day laws of physics.

Purely linguistical *karma* (in Sanskrit) or *kamma* (in Pāli) can be translated as 'act', 'action', or 'deed'; but in Buddhism also as 'intention'. Richard Gombrich, a well-respected representative of nowadays Buddhology, demonstrates in detail in his chapter 'The Ethic of Intention' of his work 'Precept and Practice', that the inquiry for intention should be the guiding principle, when one discusses definitions about divisive matters (1971, 244-268). I will now apply this guiding principle to the investigation of the divisive matter of *karma* in Buddhism.

Now, in contrast to the definition of *karma* as 'intention', stands the traditional understanding of *karma*, which is based on the *brahmanical* Upaniṣads. According to the Upaniṣads a person is reborn according to the quality of his works (*karman*: ritual prescriptions). The typical karman is sacrifice. The only escape from this cycle of rebirth is by gnosis of the hidden truth (*brahman*). The truth to be realized is about the nature of reality: microcosm, i.e. man, versus macrocosm, i.e. universe. Both have the same essence. Being essence, that *atman* is unchanging. A truth is at the same time an existent (*sat*). Essentially, we are existent but we are also conscious of that truth. Therefore, existence is conscious truth. Here, in this case of reasoning, ontology is merged with epistemology, which, according to thinkers of the Enlightenment period, is fundamentally questionable (Rodrigues, 2006: 34-36, 48-51; and Gombrich, 2006b: 27-64).

A leading philosopher of the European Enlightenment period, Immanuel Kant, claimed that people in societies characterized by Christianity do 'good' because it pays – the virtuous or prudent person will be accordingly rewarded in Heaven. "Kant held that any act, of whatever apparent goodness, done with thought of reward, in this life or the next, was ... not moral; all rewards were on par with bribes." (Gombrich, 1971: 246).

Hence, "[*k*]arma insures that the actions of a father affect his child, grandchild, and all successive generations." (ibid.). And this can also be transferred to a broader level in the sense that environmental problems, international relations, and species extinction are the results of past events; and in turn these events nowadays will impact directly or indirectly our future communities, nations, and world climate. Therefore, "[a]n individual's *karma* and the collective and cumulative *karma* of our predecessors can and will impact future beings, directly or indirectly." (ibid.).

According to that exists a basic contradiction between a prudential attitude in ethics and true morality. "[The] Buddhist doctrine agrees with Kant that what counts is intention, not effect. ... *Karma* is nothing more or less than intention (*cētanāva*). But by the law of *karma* every intention good or bad will eventually be rewarded or punished, so prudence and true morality must necessarily coincide." (ibid.).

To understand, what the Buddha was really trying to say, when he talked about karma, one has to look at, what the Buddha was arguing against. Gombrich argues that the Buddha opposed to this above described traditional brahmanical view and provided a new definition of *karma* free of ritualism. *Karma* was for the Buddha an abstract concept, he defined it as intention rather than action; "... whether the intention manifested itself in physical, vocal or mental form, it was the intention alone which had a moral character ..." (2006a: 51). His redefinition "... turned the brahmin ideology upside down and ethicised the universe. ... The focus of interest shifted from physical action, involving people and objects in the real world, to psychological process." (ibid.). Hence, the Buddha was not an essentialist, he was only interested in how things worked, rather than in what they were. In the same line of argumentation is the concept of *paṭicca-samuppāda* (conditioned or dependent origination), which clearly shows that the Buddha gave more emphasis on the processes rather than objects. This can be taken as an anti-essentialist argument for the Buddha's definition of *karma*.

Bhinyo Panijpan approaches the definition of karma first from a biological perspective and then followed by a physical point of view. Biologically, he argues, is any being "... linked with its genetic ancestors and with earlier beings and, if an organism successfully reproduces genetic progeny, it is connected with future generations of beings." (2009, 168). In addition to its genetical appearance a child is influenced by the material environment such as immediate surroundings, friends, and by non-material influences, e.g., interpersonal relations, acquired knowledge, skills, and morality. All these qualities will impact the child's future and the future of future generations (Panijpan, 2009, 169).

Hence, "[*k*]arma insures that the actions of a father affect his child, grandchild, and all successive generations." (ibid.). And this can also be transferred to a broader level in the sense that environmental problems, international relations, and species extinction are the results of past events; and in turn these events nowadays will impact directly or indirectly our future communities, nations, and world climate. Therefore, "[a]n individual's *karma* and the collective and cumulative *karma* of our predecessors can and will impact future beings, directly or indirectly." (ibid.).

In conclusion, his argument is against the traditional definition of *karma*, and the biological understanding would support a more modern definition by Buddhologists such as Gombrich or an evolutionary approach such as by Kant.

Now, according to the traditional belief, when a person is dying the mind (*citta*) passes immediately to another physical being "... at a very high speed, transporting with it the accumulate merits and demerits (*karma*) and memories of past lives, i.e., information." (ibid.). Here at this point Bhinyo Panijpan relates this belief to the present knowledge in physics.

"Whatever mechanism one proposes to explain, *citta* and its ability to transmit *karma* and memory [i.e., information] face[s] the constraints of long-held and so far inviolable physical laws. First, information can only be maintained and amplified by supply of energy. Second, information has to be packaged in such a way that it can be sent and received accurately: information sent through air and space can fade very quickly with time and distance. Matter and energy are essential in accurate communication." (2009, 169-170).

Consequently, Bhinyo Panijpan asks the rhetorical question, how all this information, which is needed for completing the traditional 'Law of *Karma*', is being transferred. Obviously, according to modern-day physics the necessary condition of information transference for the traditional 'Law of *Karma*' cannot be achieved. Whereby he emphasizes that his argumentation is not based on knowledge about digital technology – it is based purely on the Second Law of Thermodynamics (2009, 170).

As we can see from the above illustration, the approach to find the correct definition and thereby the precise understanding of *karma*, can be done from different angles of sciences. Even though they do not match accurately, but they all obstruct fundamentally to the essence driven definition of the traditional understanding.

Now, before I draw my final conclusion out of this metaphysical matter, I will look first briefly at an issue raised by Bhinyo Panijpan, which has an ethical impact on the analysis within the academic field of Buddhism.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

Biotechnological developments and their impact on the Buddhist understanding of life within the academia of Buddhology

In Bhinyo Panijpan's chapter about 'Nature, Living and Non-Living States' he claims "... modern biology and biotechnology have blurred the demarcation line between life and death, between the living and non-living." (2009, 167). This is based on the reality that it is possible to synthesize quasi-living things as viruses anew. But also whole living beings can be reproduced like through *de novo* mutation, a genetic mutation, which neither possesses parents nor has been transmitted naturally. Even "... [c]ells and tissues of dead organisms can be brought back to life and made to develop into whole organisms [again]." (ibid.). All these facts are questioning the definitions at what stage life begins and at what point an organism enters the realm of death.

This subject matter does also have an ethical impact on the former discussion about the metaphysical issue of *karma* and *citta*. If it becomes more and more difficult to differentiate between living and non-living states, then this has a strong impact on the traditional Buddhist understanding of the wheel of life, in which one's outcome is determined by one's *karma*. When we cannot clearly draw a line between life and death, how can we then say, when one life ends and the new life begins? If scientists create a new life through cloning, where does the *karma* of the cloned being comes from? It seems like that at the present moment the Buddhist teachings do not offer a clear help in understanding the impacts of these biotechnological developments, and how one could integrate these facts into the Buddhist definition of life. Therefore, it becomes more difficult to justify theologically the traditional definition of *karma* and the speed-of-light-traveling *citta*, all of which supposedly have predefined this very life, and will predefine one's next lives.

The capability of nowadays scientists to influence life-forms fundamentally leads to the essential question about the meaning of life. Hence, Bhinyo Panijpan raises the question, how can we define then the attribute 'natural'? "Is nature only natural when human hands are not involved? Is life created by biotechnology 'natural'? Is selective breeding unnatural, as opposed to natural selection?" (ibid.).

As a consequence out of the biotechnological advancements, a public desire for bioethics has arisen. Bioethics in Thailand is defined as "... applied ethics, that is, it seeks to apply moral insights and principles found within ... [Buddhism] ... to the world of medicine and scientific research and their attendant moral dilemmas." (Ratanakul, 2004, 287).

Nevertheless, there is an obstacle, if we just rely on our scientific outcomes. The same is valid, if we rest in dogmatic thinking and glorify theology as the only true approach towards Buddhism. In this regard the philosopher Karl Popper stated that we know nothing – and he not just meant it as a merely intellectual concept, rather than an incontrovertible fact. So, he concluded: "*It is important never to forget our ignorance. We should therefore never pretend to know anything, and we should never use big words.*" (Popper, 1992b, 86). Unfortunately, his wise words have not reached all ears in the Buddhist studies arena.

Finally, the growing public concern has led to set-up a national bioethics committee of Thailand in 2002 (Ratanakul, 2004, 290). This is a suitable example to illustrate how modern sciences and Buddhism are influencing ethically each other. I.e., the rise of biotechnological successes has led to an ethical discussion about the application of Buddhist principles within the Buddhist community. In return this had in impact again on biotechnologies due to the setting up of a bioethics committee. This was realized through an exchange between researchers in biotechnology and Buddhist scholars, which has led to the development of a new profession called the 'bioethicist'.

Let me close this chapter with a quite provocative partial conclusion. Obviously, all these ethical issues and open questions in combination with the previously mentioned biotechnological facts, forces Buddhology to have a closer look at the traditional understanding of life; if not even have to rephrase fundamentally the understanding of the Buddhist teachings in the light of modern-day laws of physics.

Conclusion

Buddhism as a religion in general can be studied in many ways, and the applied methodology is often predefined through the academic discipline in which the research is being carried out. There are (what I call) 'primary and secondary disciplines' in Buddhology. 'Primary disciplines' focus on the subject matter of Buddhism as religion itself, such as Buddhist theology and its counterparts in the scientific studies of Buddhism, like Buddhist Studies, Buddhology, etc.¹ 'Secondary disciplines' take an interest from their original endeavor specializing in a particular part of religion, for example disciplines of philology, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and others. However, all these sciences, be it humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, have one basic research method in common: theorization and testing, hypothesis and falsification, and conjecture and refutation (*Vermutungen und Widerlegungen*).

Nevertheless, there is an obstacle, if we just rely on our scientific outcomes. The same is valid, if we rest in dogmatic thinking and glorify theology as the only true approach towards Buddhism. In this regard the philosopher Karl Popper stated that we know nothing – and he not just meant it as a merely intellectual concept, rather than an incontrovertible fact. So, he concluded: "*It is important never to forget our ignorance. We should therefore never pretend to know anything, and we should never use big words.*" (Popper, 1992b, 86). Unfortunately, his wise words have not reached all ears in the Buddhist studies arena.

This means objectivity rests solely upon criticism. Furthermore, it is this critical tradition, which alone enables questioning and criticizing of dominant dogmas. Which plays a crucial role in the subject matter of scientific knowledge about Buddhism, where the inquirer not seldom encounters long-lasting traditional beliefs as a predominant dogma, which hinders reinterpretation of knowledge.

Of course, the state of not knowing also applies to scientific studies. In science we do not possess sufficient reason to be able to claim that we have attained the truth. What we call ‘scientific knowledge’ is usually not knowledge in this sense. It is rather an information about the differing and rivaling hypotheses, and about the way in which they have passed various tests. Aristotle and Plato would classify such knowledge as ‘opinion’ – an opinion that represents the latest state of science and passed as best tested. This means we do not possess scientifically proven knowledge – except in mathematics and logic. But mathematics and logic, which permit proof, give us no explanation of the world, they are creative tools we can use for the description of the world (Popper, 1992a, 20). Whereby in empirical sciences, which alone provide us with information about the world we live in, proof does not occur – if we understand the term ‘proof’ as an argument, which establish the truth of a theory once and forever.

It seems this leaves us quite with the same ignorance as when we have started to argue about, which would be the more appropriate approach towards the right understanding of Buddhism. Luckily there is light at the end of the tunnel, if we allow us to make usage by the methodology of criticism. Hence, my appeal to abandon dogmatic thinking and exchange it through constructive criticism in all disciplines – theology, Buddhology, and physical sciences. It is Popper again, who supports my appeal by describing how knowledge is established in the first instance.

According to Popper, the logic of knowledge arises through the tension between knowledge and ignorance. “Knowledge does not start from perceptions or observations or the collection of data or facts; it starts, rather, from *problems*.” (1992b, 65). Hence, there would be no knowledge without problems, and no problems without knowledge. Buddhology as a social science should apply the critical method by trying out tentative solutions to the above-mentioned metaphysical and ethical problems. Solutions are then being proposed and criticized by applying the method of trial and error. Thence, our knowledge merely ever exists in suggestions of provisional and tentative solutions. But herein lies the so-called objectivity of social sciences through the objectivity of the critical method; namely “... in the fact that no theory is exempt from criticism, and further, in the fact that the logical instrument of criticism – the logical contradiction – is objective.” (Popper, 1992b: 67). This means objectivity rests solely upon criticism. Furthermore, it is this critical tradition, which alone enables questioning and criticizing of dominant dogmas. Which plays a crucial role in the subject matter of scientific knowledge about Buddhism, where the inquirer not seldom encounters long-lasting traditional beliefs as a predominant dogma, which hinders reinterpretation of knowledge.

As I have argued before, the risk to encounter such hindering dogmas within Buddhist studies programs is higher in Asian than in Western countries (Enßlin, 2009, 9 and 11). Especially in the field of studies, where scholars are trying to find out, what the Buddha really meant and intended by his teachings. Notably in the research about the religious environment of Siddhartha Gautama, where no scriptures from that time are available, the researcher is left alone to find an appropriate tool, which brings light into the realm of unknowingness. This point leads me to a similar final conclusion, as in my previous essay, that the most appropriate methodology of study depends what one is looking for (Enßlin, 2009). To apply the appropriate method, dependent what one is looking for, allows the researcher by testing his old hypotheses and to formulate new and better ones, which may lead him, closer towards the truth. Such a methodology in all disciplines might lead to a prosperous interdisciplinary approach, which at the end benefits everybody: the scholars in Buddhist theology, the academics in Buddhology, and the researcher in natural sciences.

Footnote

1. For further and more detailed distinctions between theology and the scientific study of religion, see chapters “The Academic History of Studies in Religion” and “On the Search for Definitions of ‘Theology’ and the ‘Scientific Study of Religion’” in my previous paper (Enßlin, 2009: 2-3 and 6-8).

Bibliography

Enßlin, Volkmar. (2009). *A stance towards Jackson's and Makransky's concepts of Buddhist theology?* Unpublished paper in Buddhism in Modern Society. Salaya: Mahidol University.

Gombrich, Richard. (1971). *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gombrich, Richard. (2006a). *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*. New York: Routledge.

Gombrich, Richard. (2006b). *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. New York: Routledge.

Panijpan, Bhinyo. (2009). *Buddhism: A Biologist's Reflection*. Salaya: Mahidol University.

Popper, Karl Raimund. (1992a). *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde. Band II: Falsche Propheten – Hegel, Marx und die Folgen*. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck.

Popper, Karl Raimund. (1992b). *In Search of a Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years*. London: Routledge.

Ratanakul, Pinit. (2004). *Bioethics and Buddhism*. Bangkok: Mahidol University.

Rodrigues, Hillary. (2006). *Introducing Hinduism*. New York: Routledge.

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted still-lives in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the –elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea – Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang's motto – aesthetic = ethic – points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

Since early childhood architecture fascinated Wolfgang. It soon became a passion. As a realistic painter he studied perspective to master the 3-dimensional world. The combination of aesthetics with economic construction-methods led to research into bamboo, tensile architecture, dome-buildings and prefabricated units of Air-Crete. Inspired by Nature's engineering principals he develops sustainable architecture for the 21st century.

WOLFGANG WIDMOSER

SURREALIST ARTIST & ARCHITECT

You look at a shell. Contemplating its shape You realize the essence of Beauty. Its geometry involves the golden proportion. Everything in Nature progresses in a balanced way, reflecting distinct harmony – the Universe is very elegant.

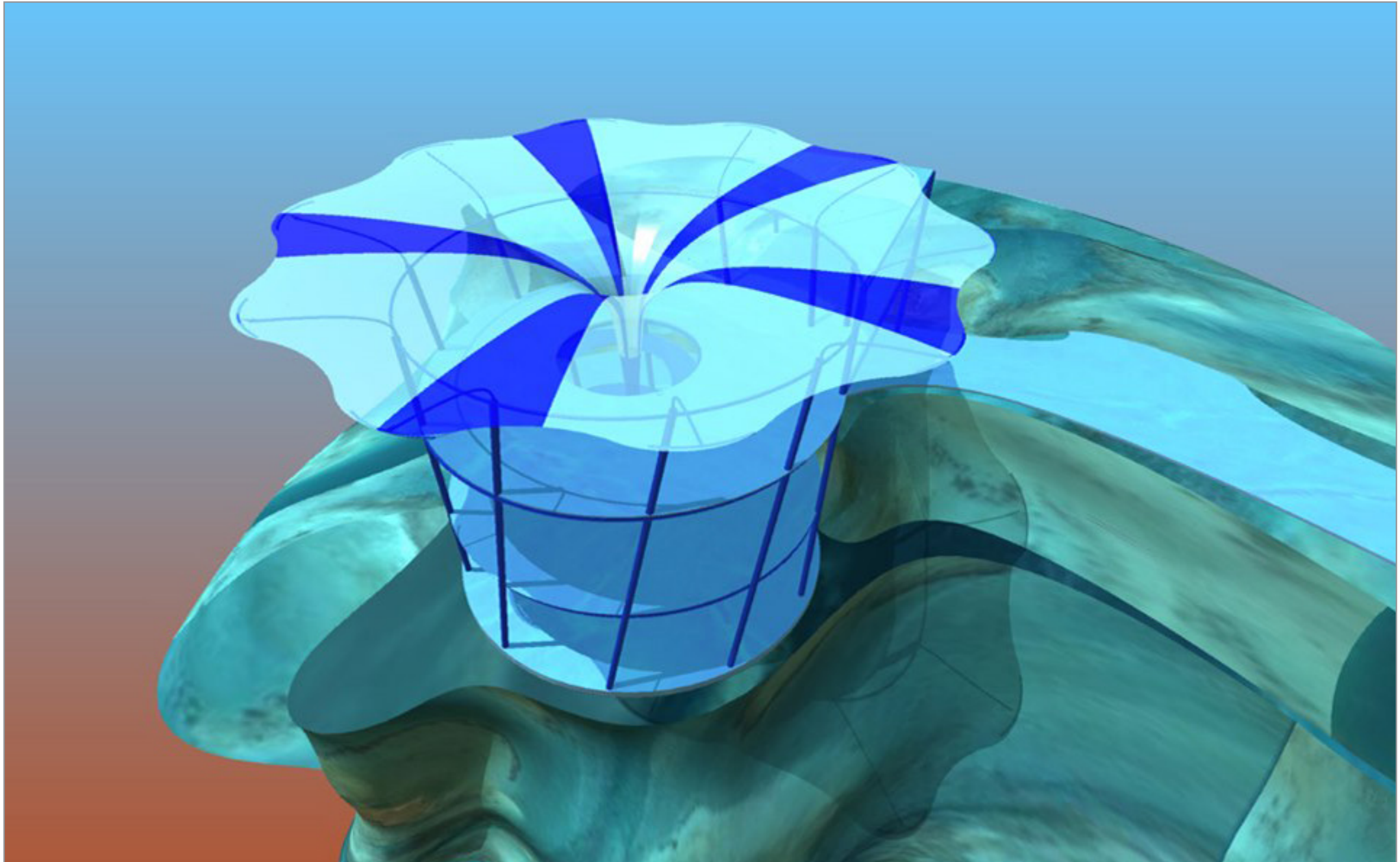
You build a structure. A building that shelters You, a skin flexible and translucent, effective like a healthy body. It organizes space for Your convenience, lets You breath and wander with the flow. Like a stroll in the park You enjoy the light, the plants and flowers, the butterflies. You forget for a moment You are in a building.

The Buildings seems to have grown out of the earth. Water washed out caves and big leaves build roofs that filter the sunlight and transform it to electricity. The energy that's runs Your laptop, charges Your i-phone and is clean. Technique and Art merge to design Your environment. To live a fulfilled life You need to create it and project Your dreams into reality.

Architecture worships Nature, the big serene Mother nurturing Her children abundantly. You want to go back to the Garden of Eden and enjoy the blessing of its magnificence. You make Your home beautiful.



Wolfgang Widmoser



3-d model of Bloo Lagoon - spa, Padang Bai, Bali.



Conical twisted circle of Bloo Lagoon - spa, Padang Bai, Bali.



Conical spiral ramp of Bloo Lagoon - spa, Padang Bai, Bali.



Alang-alang-roof sending water to the pool at the bottom, Bloo Lagoon - spa, Padang Bai, Bali.



Britta's dome in Mentigibay, Lombok.

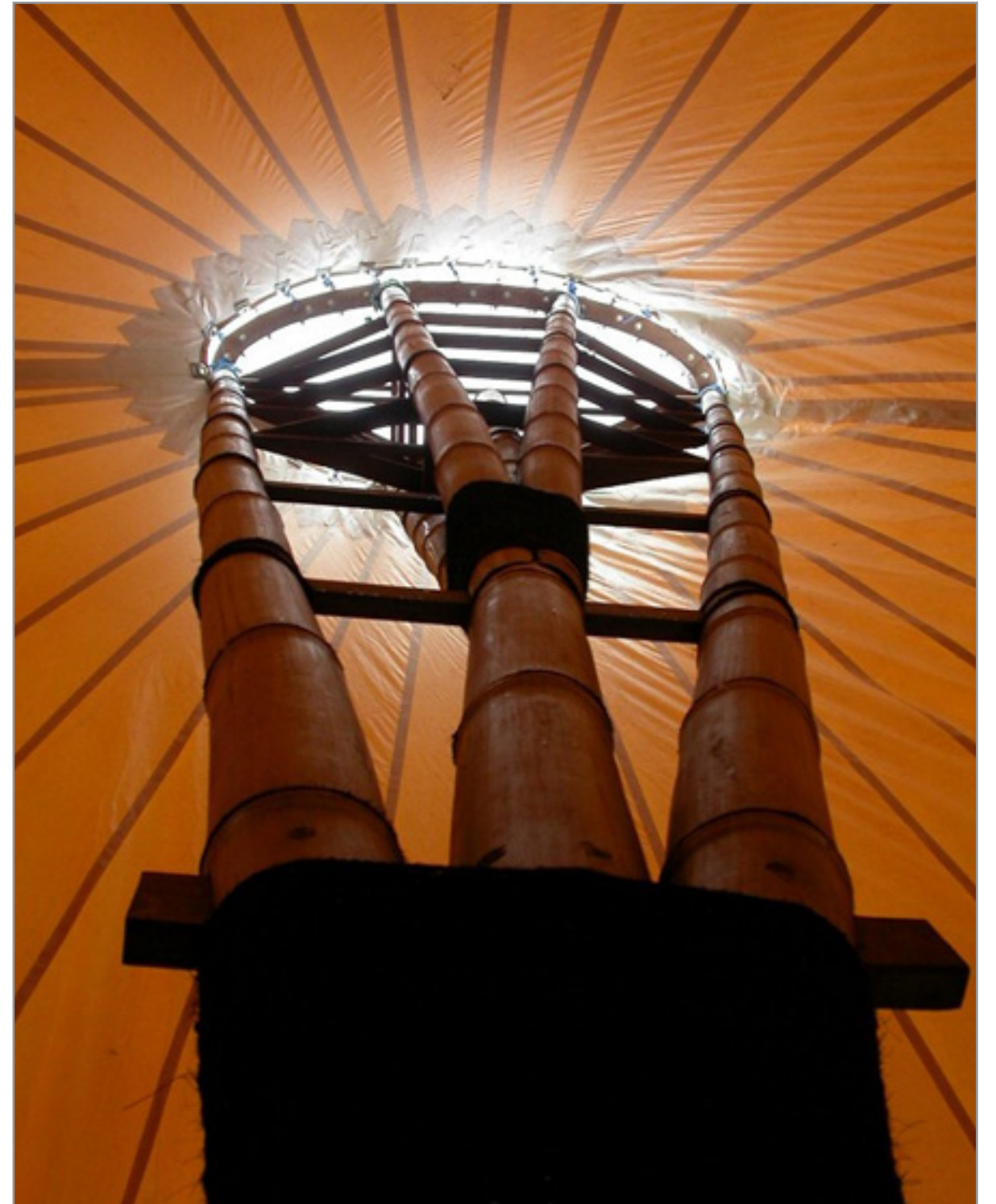


Hot-tub in Mentigi Bay, Lombok.



Tent-roof at the Ceramic Center Sayan, Bali.

08 Bamboo column at the Ceramic Center Sayan, Bali.



Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 174 publications till date (January 2020). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. www.amazon.com/markulyseas <https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/>



MARK ULYSEAS

HELL & HEAVEN

PHOTOGRAPHS OF PAINTINGS AT WAT MANOROM

The following photographs are of paintings on the walls of Wat Manorum in Luang Prabang, Laos PDR.

The images are not refined in form but nevertheless convey a harshness of a reality awaiting those on the other side. Those who have been naughty.

Perhaps it is a warning to the faithful of what may happen if one strays from the the path of all that is good and wholesome. And that enlightenment comes only when one follows the path of the Buddha.

Mark Ulyseas. Photograph by Jill Gocher.



HELL 01
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HELL 02
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HELL 03
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HELL 04
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HELL 05

PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HELL 06

PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



PATH TO HEAVEN 08
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.



HEAVEN 09
PAINTING ON THE WALL OF WAT MANOROM.

Neal Adams born in London England 1968. Formative years Neal had a passion for drawing, which lead to Private tuition from professor James turner of Wimbledon school of art. Period 1980- studying painting National gallery London, professional artist since 1998, currently residing in Asia and finding inspiration for his luminous works concentrating with mediums such as metallic leaf and oil glazing that bring texture and light into his paintings. Instagram - [nealadams_art](#) Instagram - [orgonegallery](#)



NEAL ADAMS

FULL METAL JACKET: A BRUSH WITH THE SPIRIT OF GUSTAV KLIMT

Inner radiance, metallic leaf, multi-layered glazing and resonant tonality coalesce with vibrant harmony in the artworks of British painter Neal Adams. Drawing on the ground-breaking techniques pioneered by Viennese artist Gustav Klimt, Neal reveals shape-shifting reflective patterns that play with ambient light and ask the viewer to ponder perspective and proportion.

Interpreting hidden meanings in ancient trees, secret water-courses, bamboo groves and sacred geometries, Neal's work vibrates with the energy of Mother Nature's grand design and creative compassion.

Neal draws on the warp and weft of millennial South-east Asian textile craftwork to provide contemporary expressions of traditional weaving techniques in a canvas setting – innovating abstract textures and motifs, with a shimmering blend of tonal values.

A restless adventurer in the realms of the seen and unseen, Neal's artistic journey is without beginning or end . . . but the middle path has been fun, he says.

His work has featured in art exhibitions stretching from Asia to the Americas.

Neal Adams



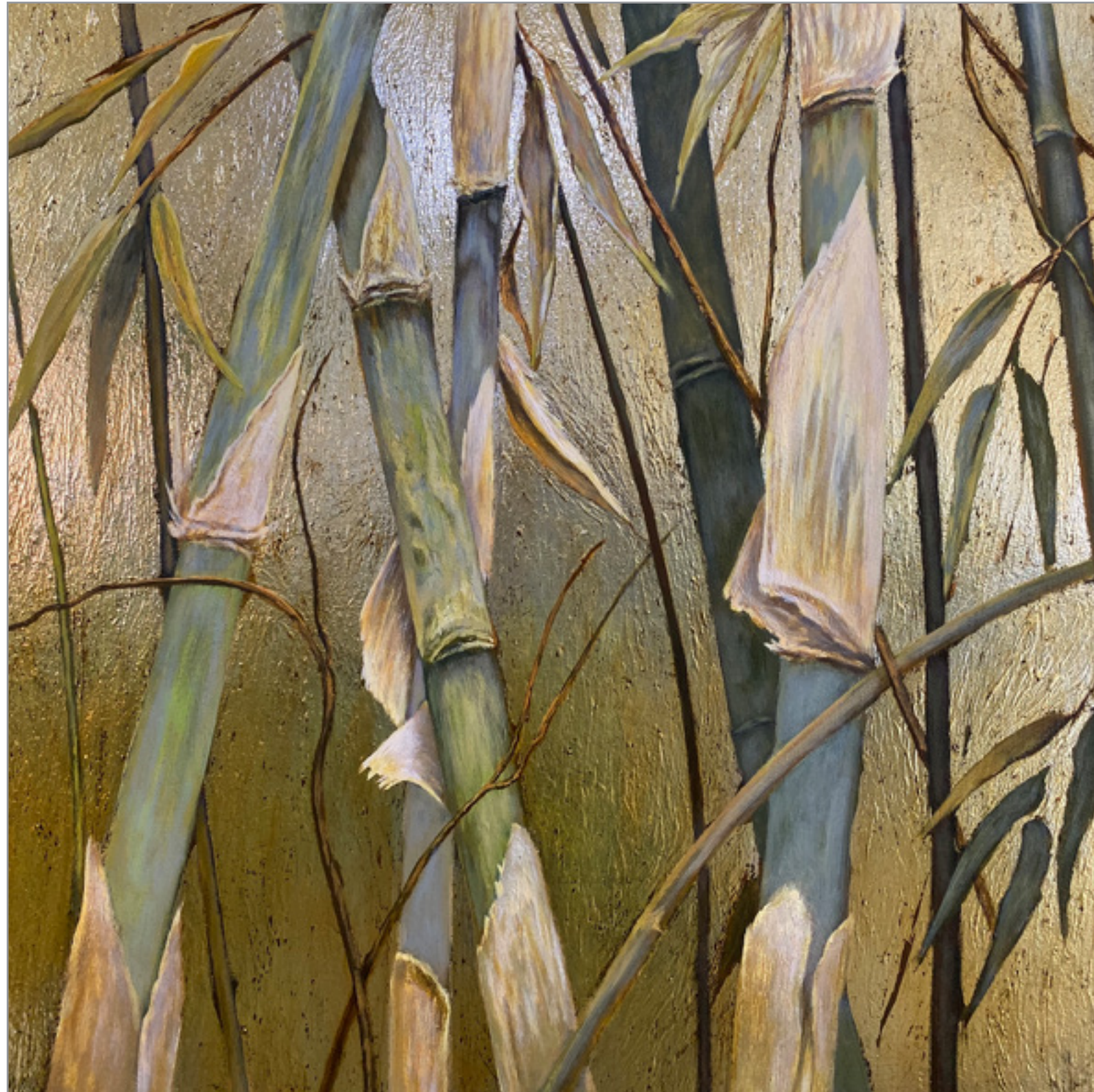
Tenun 12 - mixed media on canvas 150 x 150 cm



Flamboyant - mixes media on canvas 200 x 150 cm



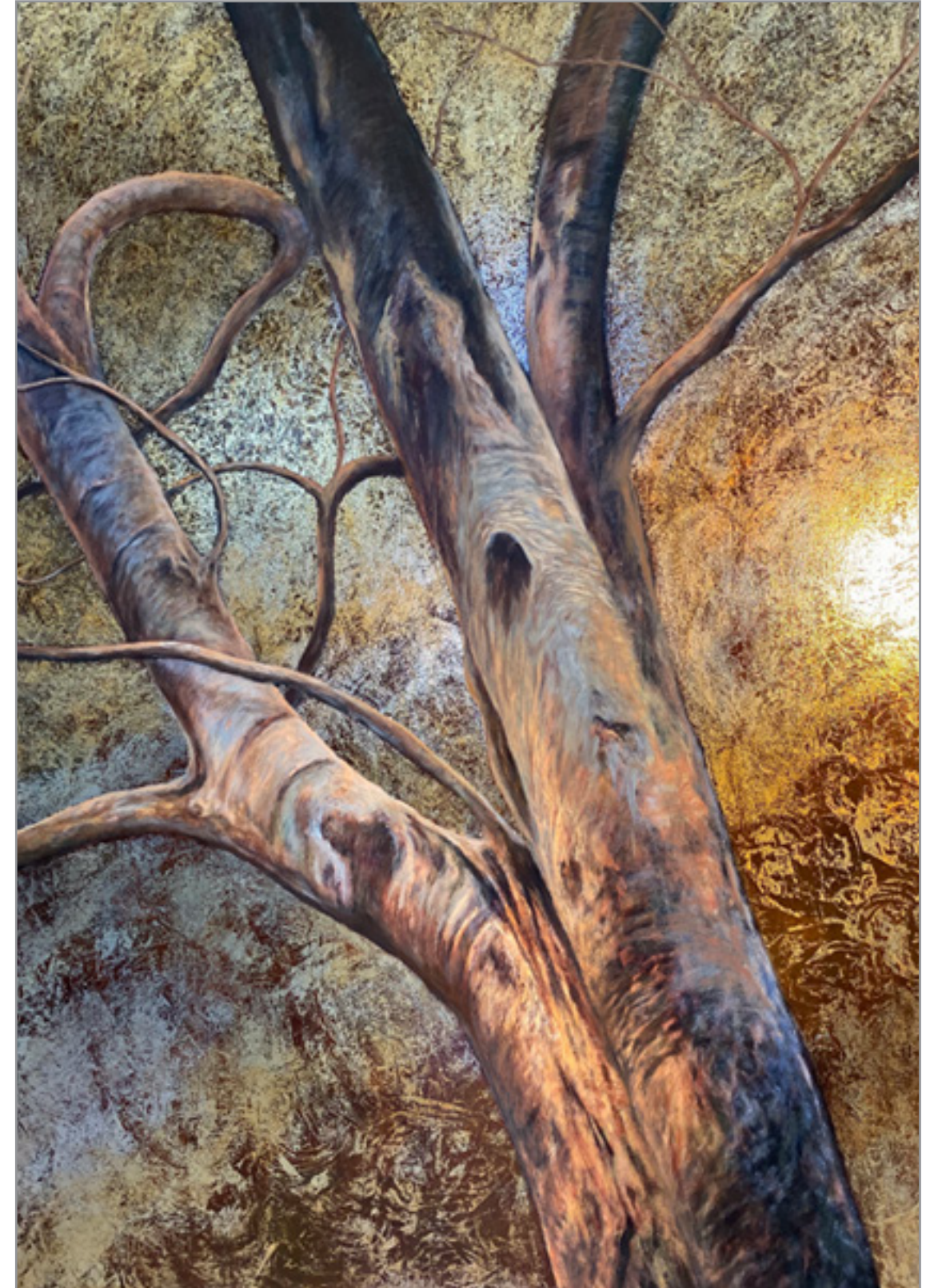
Bamboo 25 - mixed media on canvas 200 x 150 cm



Bamboo portrait - mixed media on canvas 100 x 100 cm



Aspen gold - mixed media on canvas 100 x 150 cm



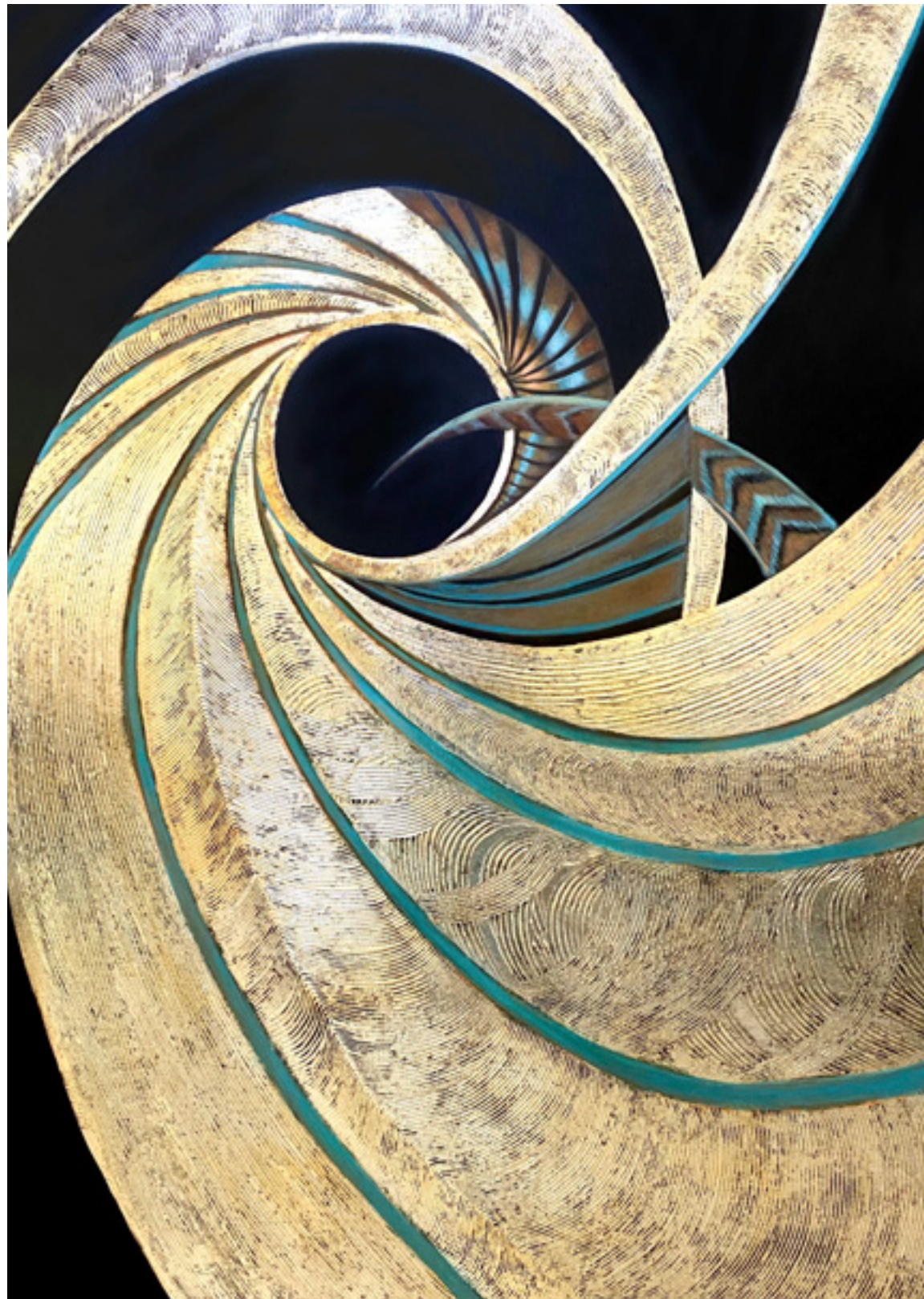
Teak tree - mixed media on canvas 150 x 180 cm



Young teak - mixed media on canvas 150 x 150 cm



Sonic Geometry 11 - mixed media on canvas 150 x 150 cm



Sonic Geometry 8 - mixed media on canvas 100 x 140 cm



Tenun 8 - mixed media on canvas 150 x 180 cm

Vũ Tuấn Hưng is a professional photographer and tour guide based in Hồ Chí Minh city. He is a tour guide for mainly German speaking tourists. His photographs feature in numerous publications across the world. If you are visiting Vietnam and need his assistance please email - vietnaminfos@gmail.com



Vũ Tuấn Hưng

LANDSCAPES OF VIETNAM

My photographs depict a different Vietnam from that of crowded streets and millions of motor-cycles.

There is an energy in these landscapes.

The vibrant ethos of my country, Vietnam, never ceases to amaze visitors. There is an energy that sustains this land despite the many wars of the last century.

It is the rich culture that supports the will and power of the Vietnamese.

Vũ Tuấn Hưng



Sailing club in Vũng Tàu, 100km far from Ho Chi Minh City.



Rice fields, central Vietnam.



Mountain road, north Vietnam.



Doppler mountain in province Ha Giang.



Phú Quốc island, most popular vacation spot in Vietnam.



Mangrove in the Mekong Delta.



Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

Bobby Chinn is half Chinese, half Egyptian, raised in England, lived in San Francisco and New York and is one of the most respected chefs in Asia. Bobby's enthusiasm, energy and passion for food are infectious as he cooks and entertains. He is now a permanent judge on *Top Chef Middle East* which is one of the highest rated shows for MBC and the most popular culinary show across the Middle East and North Africa. Thanks in part to his role as host of Discovery TLC's *World Café* series and judge on *Top Chef Middle East*, Bobby catapulted into a culinary celebrity across Asia and the Middle East. <http://bobbychinn.com/>

'Bobby Chinn, chef, long time resident of South East Asia, television personality, hustler, International Man of Mystery...what Bobby doesn't know about Southeast Asian food is not worth knowing.'

- Anthony Bourdain

BOBBY CHINN HAIR OF THE DOG

*I met Bobby when he convulsed into spasms and shades of Lenny Bruce while demonstrating how he prepared Wagyu beef steaks and his signature dish, crab cakes, at a hotel in Bali. His captivating cuisine and equally enchanting true stories of his ongoing sojourn through Asia makes him a culinary magician. As an exotic treat we bring you, by special permission of Bobby Chinn and his publishers, a chapter from his bestselling book– **Wild, Wild East, Recipes & Stories from Vietnam.***

This excerpt was published in the inaugural edition of Live Encounters Magazine in January 2010.

Bobby and I have kept in touch over the years. I have followed his culinary exploits with great interest. Live Encounters wishes him all the very best for 2020.

- Mark Ulyseas, Editor



Bobby Chinn

A friend of mine, Mark McDonald, a regular at my last restaurant in Hanoi, knew a young tour guide whose father cooked dog for a living. A regular dog caterer, in fact...grilled, braised, kebabs, schnitzel, soup, satay, stew – you name it, he cooked it.

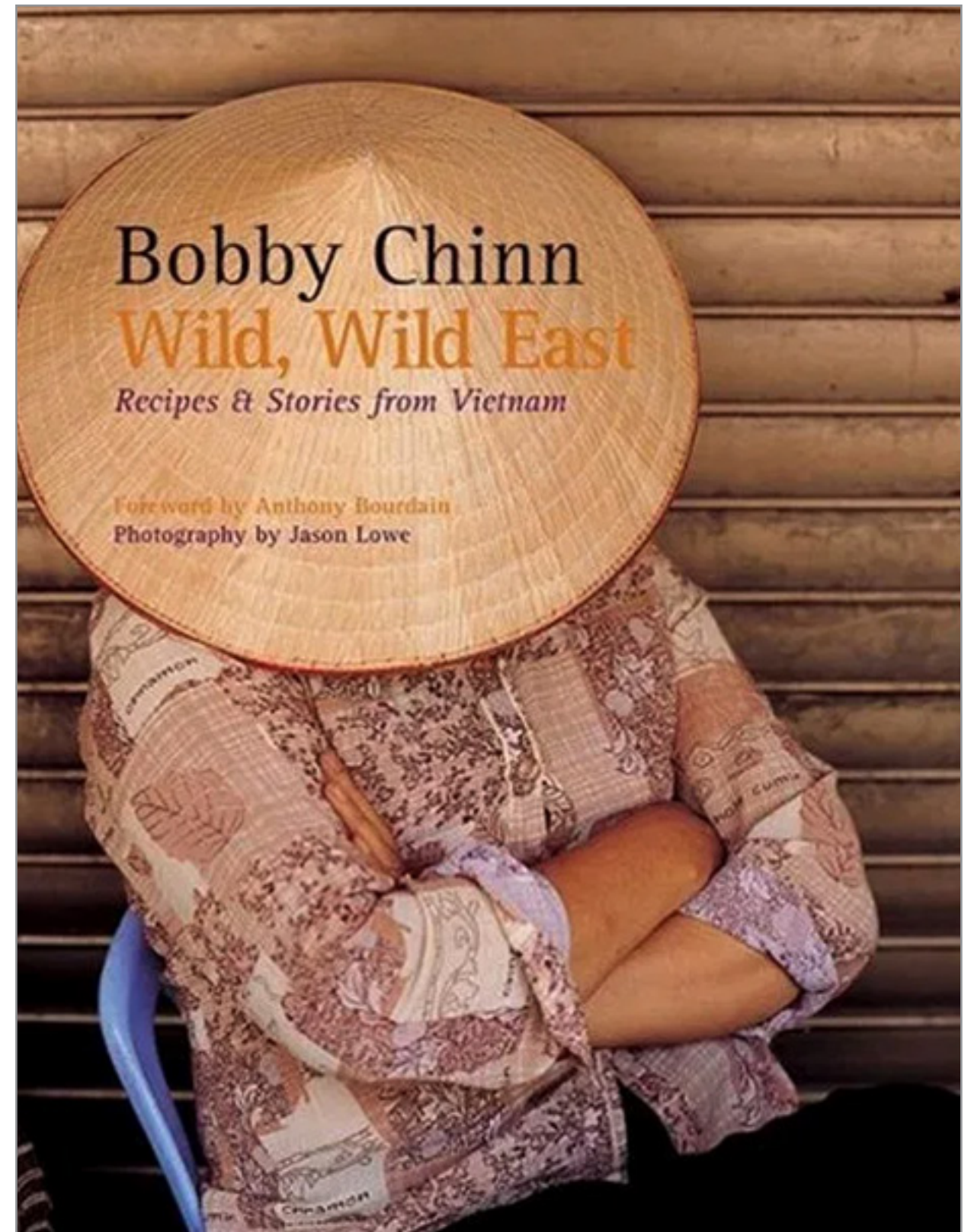
The kid was regaling my friend with his father's tales of hardship during 'The American War': living in the jungle, suffering from malaria, lack of shelter, shooting tigers, and other wild animals for food, that kind of thing. The war, of course, was a living nightmare for everybody who went through it, whether they were in the jungle or the city.

Eventually he got on to the subject of how his father, a common Viet Cong foot soldier, had come across a dead American pilot who was caught hanging in a tree by his parachute. Since the old man was doing the cooking for his troop, and since they were suffering from serious fatigue and a lack of protein, he decided to cut a piece of flesh from the pilot's thigh. He simply dropped it into the soup he was making that night. When the troops ate the soup, many of them didn't like the flavour. 'Too strong', they said. 'Too gamey.'

Now, twenty-five years later, the father is one of the great dog chefs of Vietnam. The kid invited us over for dinner with the promise that his father would prepare dog the customary and legendary seventeen different ways – a full-on buffet, doggie-style.

My pal, a reporter, asked his photographer and me to come along. He suggested I ask culinary questions during the dinner so it would appear that the story was about canine cuisine, although his real interest was in the gory tales of the war. What better way to talk about eating a side of a man than over a little dinner of dog?

The dinner took place in the old man's house in a working-class district on the outskirts of Hanoi. The house was hidden behind a bunch of storefronts that were selling cheap pottery, electrical gadgets and various plumbing supplies that were laced in a thin layer of dust. I arrived late, and had to walk through a maze of scattered pots, PVC pipes, an array of coils and wires, and Soviet electrical gizmos that would best be described as really bad junk.



<http://bobbychinn.com/book/>

After about twenty minutes our host finally arrived and greeted us. He apologised for not having enough time to prepare all seventeen versions of dog. I think it's fair to say he was a real expert. You know how people always say there are ninety-nine ways to skin a cat, but nobody can tell you 'the way' to skin it? If anyone could, it would be this guy.

The table was graced with sliced dog, stir-fried dog with lemon grass, and a dog soup, which contained what appeared to be the shank of the dog.

Everyone was waiting patiently, quietly sipping cups of bitter green tea. As I entered, I apologized for being late, but could not figure out why my friends were looking so tense. The faint sound of traffic was punctuated with the sound of two dogs – one howling, one barking – in the backyard.

'With all seriousness, I have to ask, is that dinner?'

'With all seriousness, I have no idea,' Mark responded, blushing either with nerves or embarrassment, I could not really tell.

Dining on man's best friend is a strange emotional dilemma and the three of us were petrified.

While the food was being prepared out of sight, in a kitchen out back, I started to run through all the culinary questions that I could muster in my head. We sat there speechless as the sound of a moaning dog filled the air like a cruel winter wind.

After about twenty minutes our host finally arrived and greeted us. He apologised for not having enough time to prepare all seventeen versions of dog. I think it's fair to say he was a real expert. You know how people always say there are ninety-nine ways to skin a cat, but nobody can tell you 'the way' to skin it? If anyone could, it would be this guy.

The table was graced with sliced dog, stir-fried dog with lemon grass, and a dog soup, which contained what appeared to be the shank of the dog.

Like many Vietnamese dishes, dog is accompanied with a dipping sauce to complement the flavours and tie the dish together. Eating dog without the dipping sauce is rather like eating sushi without soya sauce and wasabi. Unfortunately this light purple sauce with the consistency of watery ketchup smells bad and tastes worse. It is the closest thing to fermented shrimp shit you can get and seems to continue fermenting in front of your eyes as fine white bubbles coat the inside of the dipping bowl. It has taken me eight years to acquire a taste for it, and I still do not really like it.

As we sized up the dishes, we darted looks at each other, knowing that the moment of truth had arrived. Wondering which one of us would start, visions of my first dog started to run through my head.

It was me who started eating first, under the pretence that I was the most adventurous one, when in fact I was just quickest to detect the smallest portion of boiled dog available. It sat there in front of me on an oval plastic platter – thinly sliced and fanned nicely over the plate, free of garnishes and vegetables. It was nothing, I reasoned, but beef.

Then all my friends' dogs. They say that when you die, you watch images of your life hurtle by. When you eat dog, the experience is rather similar. You think about every dog you've ever been close to. The thought struck me: What the hell am I doing? Have I lost my mind?

Our host, wanting to honour his foreign guests at Tet, the lunar New Year, graciously pointed out the three boiled pigs' eyes. They were sitting in a bowl, like Cyclops – a real treat here, especially during Tet. Tet does that to people – they are generally much more generous and thoughtful during this very special time. But having three eyes – with detached retinas – staring at us was more than a little eerie and I quickly retreated to my Islamic upbringing.

It was me who started eating first, under the pretence that I was the most adventurous one, when in fact I was just quickest to detect the smallest portion of boiled dog available. It sat there in front of me on an oval plastic platter – thinly sliced and fanned nicely over the plate, free of garnishes and vegetables. It was nothing, I reasoned, but beef.

I proceeded to remove the fat from the meat, peeling it away and placing it on the side of the plate. It reminded me of the fat from a breast of a duck, except it was slightly charred. I turned to our hosts, gave the most superficial smile I could muster, then dropped the meat in my mouth and started to chew quickly.

As the flavours released, the tastes took me right back to English boarding school. The dog tasted exactly like the roast beef they used to serve every Sunday with Yorkshire pudding: dry, overcooked, and chewy except the dog had no large exposed blood vessels. I quickly washed it down with beer, but the taste lingered heavily on my palate.

I needed to reassure the other guys that the dog was actually edible and we are all just facing an emotional barrier. 'Tastes a little like roast beef,' I said, 'but if you put roast beef next to it, I am sure I would be able to tell the difference'.

Next was fried dog. Just as I put it into my mouth my friend frowned and complained that it was very strong, which it was. It was hard to spit it out, so I manipulated it to the back of my tongue, reached for a beer and tried to wash it down. Gamey would be an understatement: 'doggie' would be a better description.

When I asked our host if there was any part of the dog that couldn't be eaten, he didn't miss a beat. 'The hair,' he said, without the slightest trace of humour or irony. Surely the paws couldn't be eaten? No, they're savoured in soups and stocks. There is no prized cut from a dog, apparently, although cooking techniques and execution are critical.

Then we went for the soup. Our hosts were both feverishly chowing down. As I watched them shovel up pieces of dog, like famished construction workers with a limited lunch break, I could only think to myself that we (the Americans) never had a chance here. The meal for us was pretty much over within three minutes. We were like three anorexics just doing face time at a dinner table. Conversation during a Vietnamese meal is usually very limited. The table usually falls into silence, with the exception of slurps and the ploughing of rice bowls and chopsticks. This was the opportune moment to ask all my questions and thereby avoid the food. I would learn that the best dogs for eating are six months to one year old, and the young females are best of all. The Chinese and Koreans, true connoisseurs, buy a lot of dogs from Vietnam.

When I asked our host if there was any part of the dog that couldn't be eaten, he didn't miss a beat. 'The hair,' he said, without the slightest trace of humour or irony. Surely the paws couldn't be eaten? No, they're savoured in soups and stocks. There is no prized cut from a dog, apparently, although cooking techniques and execution are critical.

The normal diet for a dog is rice and leftovers which sounds perfect for a Vietnamese pet, but the dogs raised for eating are special. They're a strange half-breed that's older and fatter than the normal Vietnamese house-dog, but strangely favoured by expatriates. I know some who have gone out of their way to save a dog, which they will then feed and fatten up only for the poor thing to be dog-napped by someone.

Curiously, those who eat dog only eat a certain type – an intellectual justification for those who regard the little darlings as part of the family. The chef said other dogs do not taste like the mutts he cooks. He made a point of telling me that 'the German dog' is not good for eating. What? When was this guy in Germany? It sounded like he must have eaten a German shepherd. I imagine that during the hardships of war, they were forced to take on the K-9 corps of the US army. Hell, if he could eat a piece of leg from a dead pilot hanging from a tree, then dogs that were wounded or dead on the battlefield must have seemed like fair game.

On the Yin-Yang chart of hot and cold foods, dog makes you hot. It is a winter dish, eaten in northern areas, where the winters get very cold. When you eat dog in summer, it's said that you release a strange smell when you sweat. Dogs, apparently, can pick up on the scent, and I suspect they think you're some kind of werewolf.

Yes, indeed, it's dog-eat-dog world. Actually, it is worse than that. Man eats monkey brains, cat eats dog, cows eat sheep, and vegetarians are starting to make much more sense to me by the minute.

Dog meat is more expensive than chicken, but cheaper than beef, and the price fluctuates according to the whole lunar calendar of karma and superstition. It is eaten for good luck during the last two weeks of a calendar month. Our dinner took place around Tet, when dog is in very high demand, and costs about \$1.25 a pound.

There were just five of us at dinner that night, so the neighbours were given the dog's head. Others were awarded the intestines, liver and stomach. Thank God for neighbours. The chef asked us if we had a problem eating dog, which was very difficult to answer given that the guy had not only eaten a piece of American pilot, but had also cooked him.

As our hosts continued to work their way through the dog dishes, the rest of us were content to eat the bread and drink the warm beer. A small cat began to rub up against us, mewling and whining and twitching. When our hosts finished their meal and cleared the table, they fed the leftovers to the cat, which sent the scrawny feline into a kind of sexual rapture.

Yes, indeed, it's dog-eat-dog world. Actually, it is worse than that. Man eats monkey brains, cat eats dog, cows eat sheep, and vegetarians are starting to make much more sense to me by the minute.



This interview by Mark Ulyseas appeared in the inaugural edition of Live Encounters Magazine January 2010.

CASSANDRA

LADY IN WAITING

BENCONG (GIRLY BOY)... FREAK OF NATURE OR GOD'S GIFT TO MANKIND?

Contemporary society is unrelenting. It is like a juggernaut that often crushes individuality and smothers the voices of the meek, usually sidelining Nature's genetic goof-ups, like the Bencongs (girly boys) in Bali: Boys who at a young age suddenly find themselves confronted with the reality that they are in effect 'female trapped in male anatomy'. The memories of the growing up years imprison the hideous humiliation of being beaten by the boys in the school yard and shunned by the girls who viewed them as freaks of nature. They stumble through the labyrinth of social stigmas, ostracized by a society hell bent on maintaining a semblance of 'normality' (whatever this means).

Cassandra, the Bencong who I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing, is a female in all respects except for the appendage of masculinity, preferred to be called a she and took umbrage every time I mistakenly addressed her as him.

Is Cassandra your real name?

No. But is it important what my name is? You ask me my name because you probably want to place me and know where I come from? Yes?

Yes.

Ok. I was born into a family of 3 girls and two boys in a village in Makassar. At the age of six I knew I was a girl. My parents reluctantly accepted my condition and often referred to me as their fourth daughter. They love me very much.

Cassandra. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

A few months later I got a job in Jakarta in a well known chain of beauty salons. It was the break I was looking for. My parents were sad to see me go but they were also happy, happy I was making my life as a woman. At first it was very difficult. My salary was not enough for board and lodging. I had to find a boyfriend to support me. Many men came and went in my life. Some helped me others abused me mentally and physically. At one time I went through a phase where I hated all men.

Where did you do your schooling?

In Makassar. In school I was taunted, beaten and my food stolen from me. Sometimes even the teachers treated me with disdain. I didn't want to study. I wanted to be an actress; to be beautiful and famous and loved by all men.

And then?

After that I worked in a beauty salon not far from home. I learned how to do pedicure, manicure and body massage. Many men and women customers would ask specially for me when they came to the shop. The customers were never rude and began tipping me generously. Once a customer gave me a tip of one dollar! I would give the extra money to my mother who would buy pretty things for me. It was at this time that a boy friend told me about the hormone tablets that were available to help me transit from male to female. I took them and still do take them. After sometime my body began changing and I grew breasts like a woman. Looking at myself in the mirror one day I realized I had become a woman. A few months later I got a job in Jakarta in a well known chain of beauty salons. It was the break I was looking for. My parents were sad to see me go but they were also happy, happy I was making my life as a woman. At first it was very difficult. My salary was not enough for board and lodging. I had to find a boyfriend to support me. Many men came and went in my life. Some helped me others abused me mentally and physically. At one time I went through a phase where I hated all men. But after a year, I think, things got better. I was being paid a higher salary and I had made many friends with people like me (Bencongs). We would dress up and go out in groups to the malls and restaurants and enjoy life spending money and making love. This was the first time I felt truly liberated, truly free, a free woman.

Have you thought about a sex change operation?

Yes I thought about this but I don't feel it's necessary. An operation for my breasts would be okay. I believe in God and believe he made me like this for a reason. So why make the change?

What do you miss about Makassar?

Food! My favourite is Coto Makassar. It is a soup made of beef broth, ketupat (sticky rice) and vegetables.

I always use protection so I have never had any problem. I am thankful to the Yayasan in Makassar that helps HIV/AIDS patients and also teaches everyone on how to live healthy lives. From my earnings I send money to my family and also to this Yayasan that is doing good work for my area.

What about clothes? Where do you buy them?

What are you asking? I go to shops that sell women's clothes, where else? You still don't understand, ya?

Tell us about your job in Bali? Have you found love?

I came to Bali a year or so ago to work in a beauty salon. Often customers would fall in love with me, spend private time with me and then return home to their country leaving me with gifts and sad feelings. Sometimes regular men mistake me for a woman and when we finally reach the point of intimacy and they realize I am not a complete woman, run away or just chase me out of their room. I don't mind. That's life. I am still waiting for a good decent man to settle down with.

Do you want to get married? And do you know India has become the 127th country to legalize same sex marriage?

Yes I want to get married and adopt children. But the laws in my country do not allow it. Maybe if you help me travel to India I can get married there!

Have you had any illness related to your sex life?

I always use protection so I have never had any problem. I am thankful to the Yayasan in Makassar that helps HIV/AIDS patients and also teaches everyone on how to live healthy lives. From my earnings I send money to my family and also to this Yayasan that is doing good work for my area.

Why do you like men?

Because I am a woman!

If God gave you one wish, what would you ask for?

To be born a woman and to have children.

10TH ANNIVERSARY 2010-2019

Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JANUARY 2020



COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF NOVICE BUDDHIST MONK BY MARK ULYSEAS